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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: RUSSIAN FM LAVROV VISITS PORTUGAL

REF: LISBON 2708

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR RICHARD REITER FOR REASONS 1.4 B, D.

¶1. (SBU) Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stopped in Portugal on November 18 while returning from the G-20 meetings in Washington. In Lisbon he met with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado after which the two gave a joint press conference. Publicly, Lavrov confirmed Moscow's plans to initiate talks on a new European security architecture, saying "the problem of Euro-Atlantic security is common to all the countries in the European region and needs to be assessed by all European countries". Amado was receptive, saying, "I want to express interest and sympathy for the proposal of a new European security architecture" and emphasized "the importance of ending the cycle of the Cold War and the Soviet Union". Amado added "the debate over the general conditions of European security cannot exclude Russia", and said he is "satisfied" with the Nice summit and with the "real capacity for cooperation demonstrated in Washington" (at the G-20).

¶2. (C) One of FM Amado's senior advisors told us afterward that in their private conversation, Lavrov told Amado he was upbeat about the outcome of the EU/Russia Summit in Nice, and he expressed Moscow's intent to provide more details on the European security proposal during the OSCE Ministerial in Helsinki in early December. Lavrov discussed "format" with Amado rather than substantive details, the advisor told us, saying Moscow is preparing a detailed paper for distribution in Helsinki and wants the Ministerial to be a "first substantive discussion" rather than a drafting exercise. Lavrov explained that Russia will also propose a follow-up security-related summit for 2009 that will include existing transatlantic institutions.

¶3. (C) According to the advisor, Lavrov and Amado also touched briefly on Iran, Iraq security, and the Quartet's Middle East peace efforts, including a review of the proposal to hold a UNSC Ministerial to register support for the Annapolis process and to create a "bridge" to the new US and Israeli administrations next year.

¶4. (SBU) On a bilateral level, Lavrov and Amado agreed to intensify bilateral high-level dialogue and commercial links in 2009, and Amado noted that the president of the Portuguese Investment Agency will visit Moscow in December in hopes of increasing investment and tourism. Lavrov announced that Amado has accepted his offer to visit Moscow next year.

¶5. (C) COMMENT. As noted reftel, Portugal can be more "soft on Russia" than we would like, for reasons having to do with economic self-interest and its view of Portuguese diplomacy in the world; this meeting was no exception. Portuguese MFA

PolDir Nuno Brito has offered to provide a readout of the Lavrov visit at the Bilateral Commission meetings in Washington this Friday.
STEPHENSON